COMPULSION
OF
Conſcience
CONDEMNED.

WHEREIN,

Is plainly Demonſtrated how Inconſiſtent it is with Scripture, the Fundamental Laws of *England*, and Common Equity, *&c.*

Matth. 7. 12. *Whatſoever ye would, that Men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them: For this is the Law and the Prophets.*

Quid Tibi non vis, alteri ne Feceris.

By *Tho. De-Laune*, Gent.

LONDON,

Printed, *for* John How *next Door to the Blew-Bore without* Biſhopsgate, *and* Tho. Knowles *at the Corner of Great and Little* Tower-Street. 1683,

Theology vol 118.

Compulsion of Conscience Condemned, &c.

THere are a sort of Fierce and ill Natur'd *Pasquillers*, that keep a Bawling at all works of this Nature, though the Design be never so Innocent; The Dread of those, shan't Terrifie me from presenting these few Sheets to the Publick, Premising the true State of the Case by me asserted, *viz. That the Mind and Conscience of Man, with respect to Divine Truths, ought not to be Compell'd by outward Violence, and therefore that it is unreasonable and unseasonable to Prosecute so many of his Majesties* Protestant-Subjects, *meerly for their* Nonconformity, *to Jayls, Fines, Banishment, and to the Spoiling and taking away their Goods*, &c. the Demonstration of which shall be clearly and briefly offered with all Humillity. It is no small Addition to the Grief of the Afflicted, that when they propose their Humble Complaints, and produce their modest reasons against these kind of Severities, they are presently assaulted with a new kind of Persecution, by a parcel of cruel and unmerciful Pamphleters, who make it no less then an Arraignment of the State, and a Murmuring against the Government: In Return to which uncharitable Calumny I offer a few considerations.

1. 'Tis an easy thing for those Masters of the Faculty to Bugbear the Government with aggravated *Hyperboles*, and overstretch'd *Paraphrases*; 'Tis the very Nature of misery to complain, and I never knew that the Person complained to (if of a Noble and Heroick mind,) Interpreted the Petitioners Request at this Rate. The Poor Beggars crying for Relief, is no Arraignment of the Donors Charity. The Subjects Complaint of Grievance is no Impeachment of his Princes Justice. Our most Importunate Prayers to Almighty God, are no Arraignment of Infinite Mercy; no more are the Dissenters applications to a Prince of such Clemency as his Majesty is, justly to be so represented, neither does he in his Royal Judgment so esteem it.

2. It is Universally known that our Gracious King (whom God long Preserve) is a Prince of such Natural Clemency, and of so merciful a disposition, that he is much more apt to Pardon the Delinquent, then oppress the Innocent, and therefore his Protestant Subjects are very well satisfied in his Royal Expressions in a Proclamation Dated *April* 8. 1681, *viz. We will both in and out of Parliament use our utmost endeavour to extirpate* Popery, *and to redress all the Grievances of our Good Subjects, and in all things Govern according to the Laws of the Kingdom.* The Pious Temper of our most Illustrious Soveraign is Remarkable, in a Speech to both Houses, *Monday Feb.* 10. 1667. where he says, *One thing more I hold my self obliged to recommend unto you at this present; which is, that you would seriously think of some Course to beget a better Union and Composure in the minds of my* Protestant Subjects *in matters of Religion, whereby they may be Induced, not only to submit quietly to the Government, but also chearfully give their Assistance to the support of it.*

This evidently demonstrates that his Majesty considers that Christianity is full of Mercy, and that Christ the Glorious Author of it, is a Reconciler and Mediator, and therefore would have his Subjects disputed, or Preach'd into Church, not Worry'd, Jayl'd, Plunder'd, and Church-curs'd into Conformity.

I cannot leave this Royal-Text, till I have noted, that whereas his Majesty expresses the ends of this Composure and Union, *viz.* 1. A quiet Submission to the Government, and 2. a chearful assistance to support it; No Subjects of equal Quality have outdone the Dissenters in either of these. For,

1. As to matter of Fact, no Treasons, Rebellions, or Insurrections, (no not a Shaddow of any such things) can be justly chargeable upon them, since his Majesties Happy Restauration. All the Spys and Eagle-Ey'd Observators that have been Imploy'd to watch them, can't produce so much as a probable Circumstance of any Conspiracy amongst them against the Government, and to be sure, had there been any such thing, the Nation e're this would have Ring'd of it. Some few half-penny Scriblers rant at 'um, and in Spight of the Act of *Oblivion*, Revive what the Supream Authority commands to be forgotten; But of that and the Single Freak of *Venner*, more hereafter.

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2. As to the Probability of the thing, *viz.* That any ſuch Conſpiracy ſhould be Contrived by *Diſſenting Proteſtants*, the Perſons that ſo think, muſt ſuppoſe them meer Fools and Mad-men: For as things ſtand, they muſt firſt forfeit their Reaſon, before they can abandon their Allegiance. They are not ſo ſilly, whatſoever others think of them, but that they very well underſtand they hold their Lives, as well as their Religion by no other Tenure then his Majeſties Life. And therefore it is their great concern, as they tender all that's dear and near to them, to preſerve his Perſon and Government, and Defend both with their Lives and Fortunes. And I am confident that the whole Party of the Diſſenters, (though in ſome little things differing from each other) would Univerſally and Uniformly agree, to Sacrafice their All in his Majeſties Service, againſt any power whatſoever that ſhould oppoſe him.

The Univerſal experience of unbyaſs'd Mankind can Witneſs the Truth of what is here ſaid. Yet I know very well, what objections have been and will be made from that diſmal Topick of the Nations late Unhappy Convulſions. But that muſt be refered to a Diſtinct head.

In the ſecond place, It is certain that (theſe *Proteſtant-Subjects* his Majeſty intends, namely) the Diſſenters have chearfully given their Aſſiſtance to the ſupport of the Government. It is well-known that they are an Induſtrious Trading People, that willingly pay whatſoever Taxes the Law requires. And it is Remarkable, that no People ever expreſt a greater Zeal to oppoſe the various attaques of a Forreign (Anti-Spiritual Power) then theſe Diſſenters: And could I know any one of them that would ſhrink from his Princes Service, when his Royal Perſon and Government are menaced, I would eſteem him not only a Fool, but a Traytor to boot.

To Evidence (further) the Lenity of his Majeſty, I ſhall quote a Memorable paſſage in his Declaration from *Breda*, Dated *April* 14. 1660. *We do declare a Liberty to Tender Conſciences; and that no man ſhall be diſquieted or called in queſtion for differences of Opinion in matters of Religion, which do not diſturb the Peace of the Kingdom; And that we ſhall be ready to Conſent to ſuch an Act of Parliament, as upon mature Deliberation ſhall be offered to us for the full Granting that Indulgence.*

What can be more Pious and Consonant to the Rules of the Gospel, then what this Great Monarch here declares? No Person is excepted from his Royal-Indulgence, but such as disturb the Peace of the Kingdom. Now if there be any such among the Dissenters, let them be severely Punished: But if there be none, I cannot but wonder at the Cruelty and undutifulness of such as Prosecute their Peaceable and Innocent *Fellow-Subjects* against the mind of their Soveraign.

His Majesty has not only declared this (so Favourable) Indulgence, but also by his own experience declares the unfruitfulness of Compulsion, *March* 15*th.* 1671. in these words, *Our Care and endeavours for the Preservation of the Rights and Interests of the Church, have been sufficiently Manifested to the World, by the whole Course of our Government, since our Happy Restauration, and by the many frequent ways of* Coercion *that we have used for the reducing all erring or Dissenting Persons, and for Composing the unhappy Differences in matters of Religion which we found among our Subjects upon our Return: But it being Evident by the sad Experience of Twelve years, that there is very little Fruit of all those Forceable Courses, we think our Self obliged to make use of that Supream Power in Ecclesiastical matters, which is not only Inherent in us, but hath been declared and Recognized to be so by several Statutes and Acts of Parliament,* &c.

That *August* part of the Legislative power, the House of Commons, Resolved *Jan.* 10. 1680, *That it is the opinion of this House, that the Prosecution of Protestant Dissenters upon the Penal-Laws, is at this time Grievous to the Subject, a Weakening the Protestant Interest, an Incouragement to* Popery, *and dangerous to the Peace of the Kingdom.*

Besides this, there was a Bill past both Houses at the last Parliament in *Westminster*, for the Repeal of the 35 of *Elizabeth*, but through some unhappy neglect it was not presented to his Majesty, who doubtless would have past it. Nevertheless by that and what's mentioned before, we may clearly infer that the King and Parliament, judge that Compulsion of Conscience (of Peaceable Protestant Dissenters) is both unseasonable and unprofitable. And if I have the whole Legislative Authority on my side, *viz. King, Lords,* and *Commons,* (that is all *England*) I may modestly presume, that no Protestant will be angry at this Essay, nor censure it of

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Arrogance; it being so conformable to the Sentiments of the most Illustrious in the Nation: I must confess that there are Laws in force against the Dissenters which we shall a little Discourse of hereafter, and evidence plainly that the intention of the *Legislators* was to punish such as they supposed would be Seditious or dangerous to the Government, and they that stretch those Laws to destroy so many Innocent Peaceable Members of the Common-Wealth, do but Fight against God, and pervert the meaning of the Lawgivers; and can (at long run) expect no other Fruit of their officiousness, then what is reap'd by such as are unmerciful (to say no more) at the great and general Tribunal. Here you see those very Laws repealed, in *voto*, by them that made it, and though that does not disanull them, yet let me tell you, that for some particular Justices of the Peace, meerly upon the Information of a sort of Creatures called Informers, (whose Character in a few words I'le give you e're long) to Execute the utmost, yea, more then the utmost Severity of the Laws, against Dissenters, in defiance of the sense of the Law-makers, who did undoubtedly know what was best for us, is no less then to oppose a private Opinion to a publick Deliberation, and a private Spirit against a publick. But I'le proceed to my main business; and refer the Opinion (with a respect to this matter) of as Great Statesmen as *England* ever knew to another place.

SECT. II.

HE that will Seriously consider how tenderly the Lord Jesus Recommends the precepts of mutual Love, to all that profess his Name, making it the very Character of his Followers, *Luk.* 13.35. *By this shall all Men know that you are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another*; And how highly the Apostle *Paul* exalts the same Duty, reduceing the whole Duty of a Christian to a single precept, *Gal.* 5. 14. *For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt Love thy Neighbour as thy self.* See *Levit.* 19. 18. *Mat.* 22. 39. Cannot but sufficiently wonder, to see such as profess the Christian Religion Quarrel one with another, upon the account of special and doubtful Circumstances, respecting Divine Worship!

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It is Lamentable to see how much the present Age differs from Primitive Christianity! The Servants of the Living God in those times, would rather have given their own Lives to perswade their Enemies to Piety, then seek to undo their Brethren, to force them to Hypocrisie.

Those Maximes that interfere with the Sacred Rules of the Gospel, and threaten desolation to Men for what they cannot help, are undoubtedly to be laid aside in a Christian Common-Wealth. And I question not but that our Gracious King, when he thinks fit to meet his People in *Parliament*, will order a Regulation of these proceedings, suitable to his Benegn and merciful temper before expressed.

In the mean time I humby crave leave to offer a few general Reasons against the present Prosecutions, which my Zeal for Truth and the management of Church-Wars (like Christians indeed) extort from me.

It is notorious by Universal Experience that it is the perverse Nature of Man, *Niti in vetitum*, to long (like *Eve*) for what is forbidden; A Malady derived by an uninterpreted succession from our first Parents. Hence grew a necessity of Establishing Laws and Civil Sanctions, the end of which are, to restrain and Punish Transgressors, who by the Intemperate Sallys of private or publich Ambition, Revenge, Lust or other Vice, attempt or actually perpetrate any thing Injurious to their Fellow-Creatures.

These Laws are Calculated for the respective *Meridians* of several Nations and Governments, and Levell'd against the prevailing vice of the place, *Ex malis moribus bonæ leges natæ sunt*: The pravity of Mans Nature, caused a necessity of Laws, as Distempers do of Physick. And as the Office of the *later*, is to preserve the Health, and Cure the Diseases of the Body; so the Office of the *former* is to preserve the Body Politick. Neither of these are so limited, but that the private or publick Physick may be altered according as the Symptoms of the Disease direct the Application. And so we see that *Parliaments* (without any disparagement to their Wisdoms) *Repeal* Laws *proper* to the times they were Enacted in, and make New, as the Vicissitudes of the Publick *Pulse* stands in need of. The wisest Men have changed Counsels and Resolves upon Second thoughts: The very *Popes* themselves, and *General Councels* have done it, though the *former* Arrogate to themselves an Infallibility.

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No meer Man is so sharp sighted as certainly to foresee what the Events and Revolutions of things to come may be, without Divine Inspiration. Therefore it is rather to be Esteemed a prudential Skill, then an Arraignment of the Acts of our Predecessors, when what was suitable to them, and improper for us, are repealed, and a more seasonable remedy Applied, when the inconveniences of the *former* are discovered. I am certain that the best way to convince Protestant dissenters, (and most agreeable to the Dictates of Christianity,) is to Win them by fair and Charitable Methods; and that those Penalties the Law inflicts, should at least be relaxt, for Reasons hereafter to be produced. Every considering Man must needs know that the Biass of Interest and Education are strong Shackles to the Judgment, which Fetter it from yeilding to Demonstrated Truth. That of Education is very hard to be over-master'd. We have had Deplorable Experiments, that Opinion meerly got by Education, is sometimes as hard to be removed, (yea harder) then the Body from the Soul. It so Wheels and Intoxicates the Brain, that even amongst the *Turks*, we Read of some Wise and Moderate Persons, who would Die to maintain their ridiculous *Alcaron*.

Custome is grown such a Tyrant, that some would rather starve then eat Bread bak'd in a Pan (as a Reverend *Prelate* said) because he used to eat Bread bak'd in an Oven. Religion in many is really their humour, and a Darling Fancy passes with such for Reason; and Fashion is more prevailing then the best Arguments. O the Deplorable Estate of Christianity: Men will now reject the most Sacred of Truths, if they can but find a *Pique* at the Messenger, as if the Raving Patient would spill the best of Cordials, because not presented in a Golden Spoon!

The Design of what is said, is to make way for what follows, *viz.*

SECT. III.

Demonſtrative Reaſons againſt Compulſion of Conſcience.

NO Humane Authority, no not the very *Popes* (thoſe Infallible Tooles) can deny but that *the Word of God is the Rule of Faith*, to which all that profeſs the Name of Chriſt ought to Conform. And as all the Children of God have an Equal Intereſt in the Teſtament of their Father, ſo no one amongſt them, has any Prerogative to Impoſe a force upon the Judgment of his Brother. One holds *this*, the other *that*, a third denys *both*, they Examine Scripture, Conſult the Originals, Examine the Opinions of Antiquity; they ſincerely Pray for Illumination: What then? Why pray what Courſe will you take with your Diſſenting Brother? All that you can ſay, can't remove him from his former perſwaſion: The beſt way is to pray for him, if any *Rigorous* courſe be taken in ſuch a Caſe, and if the fire brings no light with it to Demonſtrate the Truth of it, I profeſs I cannot but ſuſpect that the Coals are fetcht from below.

He that reflects upon the difficulties that Encounter us in the way to Truth, *for Strait is the Gate, and Narrow is the Way*, and with all conſiders how ſhort ſighted the beſt of Men be, for *here we ſee but in Part, and underſtand but in Part*, will ſoon find that there is infinitely more Reaſon for Chriſtians mutually to Endeavour the ſupport and aſſiſtance, rather then ſtudy the Ruine and Deſtruction of each other.

Since all have neither an equal Depth of *Natural* Judgment, nor the ſame Meaſure of *Supernatural* Illumination, but *the Spirit Bloweth how, and where it pleaſeth*, we ought not to deſpiſe or Perſecute our *Brother*, for his Innocent and blameleſs miſtakes, leaſt we be found *to fight againſt God*, who is the free diſpoſer of his Gifts; we know *the way of Man is not in himſelf*, Jer. 10. 23. *But his goings* (or ſteps) *are of the Lord*, Pro. 20. 24. And therefore, did we bear a due Reſpect to God, we would be Content

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to wait his leasure, who has Ingaged himself by his Apostle, Phil. 3. 15. *If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall Reveal even this unto you.* Let us therefore entertain such a one, (who proceeds in the simplicity of his heart,) with *Milk*, till he grow stronger to Digest *Strong-Meat.*

I am much mistaken, if *Compulsion of Conscience* borders not upon the very Skirts of the Implicite Faith of the *Papists.* For, whatsoever a man is constrained to Swear, or profess, more then he is convinced of, proceeds from as Blind an assent, as can be match'd in the grossest *Popery*, and of such a convert no profession has any great cause to boast. For common Reason tells us, that such as are Proselyted by violence, will continue such no longer then the force lasts.

Force is meer Punishment, and consequently not Just, unless the offence be voluntary: But he that believes according to the evidence of his own Reason, is necessitated to that belief, and to compel him from it, is to drive him to Renounce the Essential part of Man, his Reason.

I can't Imagine why we should be commanded *to try the Spirits*, 1. *John* 4. 1. *And to prove all things.* 1 *Thes.* 5. 21. *If there be not a Faculty in the Soul to judge for it self.* 'Tis a strange Injunction when we are commanded to *hold fast that which we find to be best*; if after our most serious and deliberate Election, we shall be whipt out of our Conscience by Penaltys. To what purpose do we Preach poor Souls into just so much Liberty of Scripture, as may beget their torture, and not permit them to rest where they find satisfaction? Either prohibit to search at all, or leave us sensible of some benefit by teaching. To believe what seems untrue, seems to me Impossible; To profess what we believe untrue, I am sure is damnable.

As 'tis certain, that whosoever swerves from the Dictates of his own Conscience, commits a grievous Sin, *Rom.* 14. So without Question they that endeavour by Force or Artifice to draw any Man to profess or Act contrary to what his Soul believes, are as deeply guilty of the same Crime, as the Apostle says, *When ye wound the weak Consciences of your Brethren, ye Sin against Christ.* 1 Cor. 8. 12. How dangerously then do they expose themselves to the Just Indignation of God who drive others, (and fall themselves) into this Evil? *&c.* How wilfully do they attempt to extin-

guiſh the Light of Nature, which Indiſpenſably obliges all Men to *Deal with others, as they would be dealt with themſelves?* This Light is placed by God in clear and candid Souls to Shine and guide them, but in black ones to condemn and burn them. I could heartily wiſh that all Men would take the Advice of the Apoſtle, *Rom.* 14. 13. *Let us not therefore Judge one another any more: But Judge this rather, that no man put a Stumbling-Block, or an occaſion to fall, in his Brothers way.* If this Bleſſed Counſel were but followed, what a happy Nation might ours be?

Nothing hath cauſed more miſchief in the Church then the Eſtabliſhing new (and many) Articles of Faith, and the Incumbrance of Gods Worſhip by Ceremonys, which all acknowledge to be more for Ornament, then any Eſſential neceſſity. And had theſe Stumbling-Blocks been removed, 'tis certain that our too too deplorable diviſions would in a great meaſure vaniſh, but ſince there are, and muſt be Diviſions, let us pray to the Phyſitian of Souls to heal them. *To Love one another* is a command of the Almighty, which never was, nor never will be repealed. And O! how diſagreeable to that Sacred precept is it, to vex and trouble each other! How rare is it to ſee the very *Brutes* prey upon their kind! Yet we ſee mankind deſtroy mankind, not only deveſting themſelves of humanity, but with a more then Brutiſh cruelty, rage againſt their very Brethren. To break ſo evident a Commandement, to eſtabliſh that which is (more then) doubtful, is certainly contrary to Goſpel-Laws.

A thing may be clear to one man that would fain impoſe it, but it may be doubtful to him on whom it is impoſed, which no Body can help. Muſt the doubtful Perſon be knockt o'the head therefore, or muſt we pick out the Eyes of all that cannot See as well as our ſelves.

Suppoſe the poine be clear in Scripture; why then ſay I, there is no neceſſity to make a new Law to Impoſe it; much leſs a new Article of Faith. If it be but deduc'd or infer'd; 'tis certain that what one thinks clearly deduced, another as Learned and able as he, may think not to be ſo.

Mens underſtandings are as various as their Speech or Faces: And is it Juſt for one man to Quarrel with another, becauſe different from him in either of theſe? or put him upon a Rack to ſtretch him to his own dimenſion, if not ſo tall as he? He that

thinks

thinks all Diſſenters either malicioufly or wilfully Blind is (in my Judgment) defective in Charity. If theſe People Diſſent out of humour or Hypocriſie, every thinking Man will pronounce them abſolute Fools. For they that play the Hypocrites; do it either for Worldly ends, or vain glory. Now theſe Men, who are under the laſh of every Informer, and ſuffer ſo unmercifully; cannot be charg'd with Diſſenting for worldly ends, becauſe they may ſecure themſelves by Conformity, and by neceſſary conſequence their Nonconformity is out of pure Conſcience. Elſe (as was ſaid) they are ſtark Ideots, and if ſo, the State has no need to fear them, and it would be a great diſparagement to ſo wiſe and Illuſtrious a Government to ſeem to fear ſuch a Company of ſuppoſed ſimpletons. But then on the other hand, if their Diſſent be really from the ſtrong and convinced perſwaſions of their minds, I would in all humility beſeech all, that have power to Execute the Laws againſt them, to conſider, that they are Chriſtians, their Bretheren and Countrymen, and that they would treat them as ſuch, in agreement to what our merciful Prince declared, as before, *viz. To Puniſh only ſuch as are diſturbers of the Government.* For my Pen ſhall never be an Advocate for any Perſon of that Character. If any ſhould think that theſe Men Diſſent out of *vain Glory*, he muſt ſtill ſuppoſe them worſe Fools then before; For who but a Madman would purchaſe the applauſe of a few Perſons (an Idle airey thing that will neither Feed nor Cloath him) at the dear rate of 20*l.* a Month, 20*l.* a Sermon, &c. or a Priſon with all its tormenting apurtenances? Is this a comfortable Bargain?

Well then, ſuppoſing them weak Brethren, what ſhall we do with them? why the *Apoſtle* readily anſwers this queſtion, *Rom.* 14. 1. *Him that is weak in the Faith receive ye, but not to doubtful diſputations.* Here is not one word of ſending him to Priſon, or Fining of him; No, No, they us'd to perſwade and convince, not compel men to Conformity. Neither did the ſtrong Chriſtian Perſecute, but Cheriſh and Inſtruct his weak Brother. For,

They very well knew that no man can be forced to believe, he may, ('tis true) be compelled to ſay this or that, but not to believe it; the Dominion over the External part has no Rule over the Soul. And though a Man may be compell'd to diſſemble his thoughts, it is impoſſible that any outward force can change the opinion. The Soul of man is a thing ſo generous, that it is

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rather perſwaded by mildneſs, then won upon by rigorous and Coercive Methods. And the Nature of Chriſtianity, is really adapted for ſuch procedures. If *Compulſion of Conſcience* had been thought by the Almighty, to be the beſt way of reducing Mankind, our Lord Jeſus would have uſed it. He that had the Command of the whole Heavenly Militia, (one of which in a Night Slew 185000 of the *Aſſyrian* Hoſt) could with as much eaſe ſubdue the Great *Auguſtus Ceſar*, as command a Fiſh to bring him the Tribute Money.

He that has good Eyes, and has been taught to Read, will Read you a clear Printed Book, but if he be Blind, or having Eyes wants Light, or never learnt to Read, or if the Print be Blind, you may ſooner daſh out his Brains with a Club, then make him perform an Action he cannot.

Faith is not to be driven like a Nail into the Head, or Heart, with a Hammer: For a Man cannot believe if he would, till the Gift be beſtowed upon him. And the Scripture is plain, when it tells us, *that Faith is the Gift of God.*

Arguments are good Inducements, but force has no countenance in the Goſpel, much leſs a command. Pray peruſe theſe Texts, *John* 20. 31. 5. 39. *2 Tim.* 3. 15. *Deut.* 12. 32. 'Tis an eaſy thing to pick out ones Eyes, but all the Art of Man cannot reſtore thoſe Eyes again, or make Eyes for one Born without them. Even ſo *Compulſion* can make a Man a Hypocrite, but all the ſeverity in the World cannot make him a true Convert.

If Reaſon underſtands not what is declared, how can we by way of Deduction, or the beſt framed Syllogiſms yield to what we apprehend not to be Demonſtrative? All diſcourſe and Ratiocination ought to be of things Intelligible; The object of Faith is purely and eſſentially Divine, and the Soul cannot arrive at that (Beſt of) Learning, till the Spirit of God becomes the Tutor.

Before I leave this (by way of digreſſion) I cannot but borrow a few excellent Notions of an Eminent Prelate now Living. 'There is no giving way to Rational deduction and human Argu-'mentations againſt Scripture, for then a cunning *Sophiſter* may 'lead men into many Errors. To go about to prove by Reaſon 'ſuch things as are above Reaſon, is wonderful: And to diſ-'courſe of what we underſtand not, is a ſpice of madneſs. The 'Concluſions drawn from ſuch Diſcourſes are dangerous, yea,

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a meer Ignis fatuus that misguides Men, 2 *Tim.* 1. 13. Divine Mysteries dress up in the attire of meer humane Oratory, is like a chast and Vertuous Matron, trickt up in the habit of a Curtezan. The Divine Substance is not expressible by human Rhetorick, nor the most delicate Flourishes of an Artificial Pencil.

That which Men call School-Divinity, has been perverted at such a Rate, that it has prov'd a meer Plague to Christianity. There you have new Questions, nice Distinctions, and intemperate Conclusions tost up and down like Tennis-Balls. And from thence proceed cruel Bickerings, and Theological Wars.

The first Divinity-School was set up at *Alexandria* by *Pantænus*, and from thence Sprung the Arrian-Heresie, which like an ill weed soon over ran all Christendom. In the Subtilty of these Schools Heresie grew Refined, and with their School tricks of distinctions and Evasions, almost baffled the plain and simple Professors of the Gospel.

The Primitive Doctors, converted from Heathenism, and well skil'd in *Philosophy*, *Antiquity*, *History*, and *Logick* or *Sophistry*, Translated these Sciences (falsly so called) into Christianity, to Illustrate by their Indiscreet Zeal, and Imbellish Christian knowledge, by Artificial Forms and Figures, but rather indeed defaced it. *Col.* 2. 8.

He that seriously and without prepossession considers the Nature of Christian Doctrine, will conclude, that it must be taught by the Demonstration of the Spirit and Power, and not by the School harangues of *Sophistical Syllogisms* and *Enthymems*.

Considering Men are wary, (and so they had need) of the Subtilties of such as would pervert or deceive them, in so important a matter as Religion is: Because Heresies appear not first in their own Natural Shape, but they complement you in Disguise, *Masqueraded* with specious pretences, the Author of these Heresies will prese into their Service, this and that obscure place of Scripture capable of various Interpretations. But (mark I pray) when they have once got Footing, by degrees they lay a side their Vizards, and march on Brazen Fac'd (I mean bare Fac'd.)

Well, but as to *Compulsion of Conscience*, since the affront is only to the Divine Majesty, supposing the Dissenter errs, methinks we should leave God to vindicate his own cause: For what can

be

be a greater disparagement or more derogatory to the honour of the Godhead, then to think he wants the help of Man to defend him. Mark how *Peter* was rebuked by our Saviour for cutting off *Malchus* his Ear. Besides, do but consider the Methods used by the Redeemer of the World, in Conquering his Enemies, and you will find it was by Preaching and Suffering, and if his Disciples wont follow so Illustrious an Example, they deserve not to be called by his Name, nor be Dignified with the Title of Christians.

In all well order'd Governments the Magistrate may and ought to punish Evil doers, but not Evil Believers, for God Reserves that to himself, it is his Divine Perogative, for he only is the Heart searcher; and Man cannot possibly have a right Cognizance of the concealed or Evil thoughts of another; because, for any thing he knows, *The greatest Professor may be the greatest Atheist.*

I do not Remember that Christians ever took up Arms against their Governours in the Primitive times for propagating their Profession, or to preserve themselves from Persecution; And he that will do so, meerly upon that account, is either a Fool or an Atheist: A Fool, because he rejects the opportunity of gaining the Reward promised, *Matth.* 5. 12. *Blessed are ye when Men Revile you and Persecute you*, &c. Or an Atheist, because he wont believe that God will be as good as his word. But to Return where I left, I may reckon that common saying among shallow Fancys, *viz. That a Pigmy on a Gyants shoulders sees more then the Gyant.* The Question is not of seeing more, but clear discerning. If both these see a Beast at a Miles distance, and contend whether it be a *Horse* or an *Oxe*, the *Pigmy* on the *Gyants* Shoulder, is never the nearer discerning what it is, because it depends more upon the sharpness of Sight, then the height of his shoulders: so we have no possible assurance that the Doctrine delivered to us by man (if not revealed in Scripture) is absolutely true, because we are certainly assured that 'tis possible for him, or any man to erre, yea in this very Doctrine. The Great *Augustine* (the wonder of his time for sharpness of understanding, and great modesty withal,) believed it absolutely necessary that Infants should Receive the *Lords Supper*, and termed it a down right *Heresie* to affirm that there were any *Antipodes*. So *Lanthantius* a notable Wit, and a great Scholar.

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The most Eminent of the Evangelical Doctors grant that even general Councels have erred, and if anyman should deny it, the thing may be easily Demonstrated. Our Church Historys declare how often they have thwarted one another, in things (point blank) contradictory. At which we need not wonder, for they have no promise of Infallibility; You'l say they are the Churches *Representative*; What then? I know no promise in the whole Bible, that the Representative should be Infallible. 'Tis true *The Gates of Hell shall not prevail against the Church*, but what's that to a General Councel which (by a modest Calculation) cannot amount to one part in 10000 of the Universal Church. But I need say no more, then that these (so called) general Councels have been *ex diametro* against each other, as before hinted.

Parents are accountable to God for their commands, as well as the Children are for their Obedience, natural Parents are by meer Nature prompted to seek the Love of their Children: So ought Spiritual Parents who are Stiled *Ministers of God* (who is Love) to demean themselves towards their Spiritual Children. And consequently is it not more suitable to this excellent *Grace*, and Parental Tenderness to lead the People into the House of God, rather then to whip them in by fear? And to put on such a habbit as will Invite them in, rather then fright them out? What wise and Loving Father would put on a winding Sheet to Fright his weak and simple Child?

Man (says a Reverend Pen) is a very tickliſh Animal to Govern; he will not always be guided by Reason and Authority. He has a *Will* as well as *Reason*, and will have his own *Will* in many things; even among the very Godly themselves (which is to be Lamented) but few are so intirely Pious, as wholly to deny themselves. This is so high and sharp a point of Religion, that you may break the Heart strings of many in winding them up so high; and so you may crack all their Religion.

I cannot in Conscience when I Treat upon so serious a Theam, but Remark, that the Carriage of some Preachers has created a great dislike of that Sacred Work, as 'tis managed by not a few, and so are themselves the causers of that Dissent, which they exclaim against: too many Preach not Christ but themselves; They take here and there a Sentence of Scripture, the shorter and more abstruse the better. Then to shew their Skill and Invention, they

Divide and Subdivide it into Generals and Particulars. Here you have the *Quid*, the *Quale*, the *Quantum*, and such like *Quack-Salving* Forms, which the People understand no more then they do *Greek* or *Latine*. Then they look into this or that quaint Author and pick out a Sentence of a *Philosopher* or Father, some nice Speculation or other, and Labour to Couch all in Elegant Language. But what's the end of this? why certainly 'tis meerly to shew their Wit, Reading, or whatsoever else is excellent in them. But, Pray mark, how such practises are Charactered, 1 *Cor.* 2. the whole Chapter is worth Reading; and plainly demonstrates that this kind of Preaching is not Apostolick, that is, that they Preach not in the Demonstration of the Spirit, but in the Demonstration of their Learning.

Many of the Ancient Fathers (especially the *Greeks*) have been ever Fond of Nicetys. These, when Converted to Christianity, Transplanted their Beloved Rhetorical Flowers of humane Learning into Christian Gardens, which prov'd indeed Weeds. Common Experience will be my Advocate, when I say that humane Nature is apter to give Nourishment and vigour to humane Principles then to such as are Divine.

Pray when did ever any Learned, Witty, Rhetorical Harangue, or cunning Syllogistical Discourse convert the tenth part of St. *Peters* or St. *Pauls Foolish Preaching*, as he terms it? (tho 'tis indeed the *Wisdom of God to them that are Perfect.*)

How widely different is the manner of Preaching in the Apostles time from Philosophical Arguing, and Rhetorical declaiming? the Preaching then, was either Catechistical Instructions, or Pious admonitions, not tying themselves to any form; but past from one matter to another, as the condition of the Hearers required, and not as the Preachers Fancy and Reading prompted him.

'Tis Reported of the Emperour *Caligula*, that he Judged, Condemned or acquitted Delinquents *as best agreed with the Current of his Oration*; So some now a days shape their Discourse more to the Applause, then Edification of the Hearers. Such Sermons may be better termed Banquets for full wantons, then Instructions for such as are almost Starved for want of Spiritual Food. It may nourish an Auditory of *Camelions* that Live by Air, but can never make sound and Solid Christians.

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The *Schoolmen*, and such as greedily Suck their unexamined Dictates, have set up an opinion, that none are fit to Preach but such as have been Students in the University; Where if he hath Learnt a little to chop *Logick*, and produce some nice Speculations from *Aristotle*, *Plato*, *&c.* or some *Theological* distinctions from *Aquinas*, *Peter Lombard*, or the rest of the distinction-makers, or a little gingling from the *Poets* and *Orators*, then, O! then, (but you must suppose him documented by the *Guide to the Inferiour Clergy*) he sets up for a Spiritual Pastor! the weightiest Office in the world, because Mens Souls, (their better part) is concern'd! 'tis very strange that such qualifications (common to Graceless as well as Gracious Schollars) should render him capable of *rightly Dividing the word of Truth*: For if you seriously Examine the whole New-Testament, you will not find one tittle of those Sciences in the Gospel, but you will see they are rather severely arraigned, as Enemys to it; Because they tend to *vain Jangling*, *Strife*, *and Contention*, not tending to that (which is the end of Preaching) the *Conversion* and *Edification* of Souls, *Eph.* 6. 12. 2. *Cor.* 10. 4.

The Apostle *Paul* in his Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus* (two Primitive Bishops,) tells you the qualifications of Bishops and Deacons, *viz.* *Gravity*, *Sobriety*, *Meekness*, *Diligence*, *&c.* Not *Mathematicks*, *Logick*, *Physick*, *&c.* Not the Study of *Aristotle*, *Plato*, *Cicero*, *Euclid*, *Scotus*, *Aquinas*, *&c.* And why? why there is very good Reason: For 'tis most evident that the greatest part of Academical Learning is as useless to a Spiritual Pastor, as the Art of *Navigation* is to a *Physitian*: The Apostle telling us in plain terms, that he desired *To know nothing but Jesus Christ*, *and him Crucified*. There's the qualification with which whosoever is qualified, may say with *David*, *Come I will shew thee what the Lord hath done for my Soul*. But without it all the Arts in the World can't make a Preacher, as the old verse says,

Qui Christum discit, satis est, si Cætera Nescit,
Qui Christum nescit, nihil est, si Cætera Discit.

Christ may be better Preach'd by a Grave, Conscientious Man, well vers'd in the Scriptures, and the Mysterys of Faith, tho never heard of any University, nor skill'd in any Language but his Mother-Tongue, then by the Students of *Aristotle*, *Scotus*, *Aquinas*, *&c.* *(quant ales)* with all their knacks of *Quidditys* and *Qualitys*,

logy, *Syllogisms*, and *Enthymemes*, *Distinctions*, and *Subsumptions*, &c.

It is Remarkable, that no *Greek*, *Italian*, or *French* of a thousand understood any Language besides his *Mother-Tongue*, when the Gospel first was Planted. And 'tis worth noteing, that the Apostles received the Gift of Tongues, because they were to Preach to all Nations, but we find no infusion of School-Learning by the Holy-Ghost, nor any more Gift of Tongues, when the Gospel was once spread over the World.

This is further very Remarkable that no Man can produce an Example of any Nation that was ever Converted to Christianity by *Philosophical* or *Rhetorical* Preaching.

I hope the Digression will be excused, if I note the mischief of Excursions; For if such be countenanced, we shall never have an end: because the Itch Men have to shew their Learning, will continue this vain and unedifying Practice. Possibly the Preacher sits in his Study all the week long, picking from this and that and 'tother quaint-Authour, a few Beautiful Flowers; well, what then? then he comes on the Preaching day (commonly called *Sunday*) with his Nosegay in his Hand (*viz.* his Notes pinn'd up in his Bible) to entertain Ladys and Courtiers. But what have you to say to that? Ple say nothing, but refer the *Reader* to the *New-Testament*, and when he has seriously perused it, let him Act and Believe (with respect to the Premises,) as that Sacred Book plainly Teaches him: for if that won't do, nothing but a Miracle will do it.

Before I proceed, give me leave (good *Reader*) to tell you, that by what I have here written, (partly from Persons Eminent in our Church of *England*, and partly from my own experience and observation) I would not be understood to cry down humane Learning, as a thing of no use; nor throw the least disparagement upon our Famous and Reverend Divines, for I honour them from my Heart, and know that amongst the Clergy of the Church of *England*, (as Established by Law,) there are as Eminent Men, Conspicuous to all, not only for their Learning, but also for their Piety and Gracious Conversations, and their painful and Industrious Labours in the Service of our God, as any in the World. No, no, 'tis the Abuse only I write against, and 'tis that alone I heartily wish were Reformed.

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The knowledge of the Original Languages in which the Scriptures were Penn'd is of very great necessity, that we might converse with that Sacred Book in its own *Emphatical* and *Native Idiom*, and that we may not be imposed upon by wrong Translations. But withal let me add (which no Learned Man I am sure will blame me for, if unbyas'd) that we are to consider the Bounds of *Philosophy* and Humane Literature. These are to be exercised in the things that may be known by the Light of Natural Reason; But when they Travel beyond that Road, and must needs be defining things beyond their Sphear, they become extravagant and Saucy.

This was the Judgment of that Excellent and Learned Lord *Picus* Earl of *Mirandula*, in his Epistle to *Aldus Manutius*, a sharp Scholar: *Accinge te ad Philosophiam, sed hac Lege, ut Memineris nullam esse Philosophiam quæ a Mysteriorum veritate nos abducat. Philosophia veritatem quærit, Theologia invenit, Religio possidet.* That is, *Address your self to the Study of Physosophy*, that no *Physosophy* should seduce you from the Truth of the Mysterys (of Christian Religion) *Physosophy* seeks Truth, *Divinity* finds it, (but) *Religion* possesses it.

Every Thing is good and proper in its place, as for Example, *Fire* is useful in the Chimney, but it is mischevous in the House-Top. There, that which before would Warm you, or be Serviceable to Dress your Meat, will Burn you and your Meat too, unless you can quench it, or Run away from it. So Learning is good as an *Handmaid*, *Hagar like*, But if it must needs be Mistress, and Usurp Authority in the Family, it like Scoffing *Ishmael Genesis* 21. 9. *Gallat.* 4. 30. Is will Mock at the Spirit and the Simplicity of the Gospel, let it be cast out. For nothing Supream will endure to be Rival'd in his Authority, Prerogative, especially in Divine matters, is as tender as the Apple of ones Eye.

There is no Sober and Impartial Divine but will Grant, that it is the work of Faith, by the Aid of *Divine Revelation*, to be Employed in the Mysterys of Religion. From which concession it is evident, that when any Man undertakes to Teach us Divinity, by the meer Guidance of Nature, (call it Natural Physosophy, University Learning, or what you will,) but shews himself by such an attempt as absurd and

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Nonsensical, as if the Eye should Incroach upon the Ear, and would pretend to Distinguish the various gradations of Musical Notes, or the quavers of a pleasant Instrument, which it cannot so much Imitate, as the dullest Brute can Imitate the warblings of the Nightingale.

If the Example and Practice of the Lord Jesus Christ be worth Imitating, you will find that he made Choice of such as were Despised and Unlearned. Why? Because his Grace might so much the more be Magnyfied, and that the Honour due to His Soveraign Converting Power might not be Attributed to any Humane Faculty of Rhetorical Perswasion. He made Fishermen, a Tent-maker, and other Tradesmen, Messengers of the Everlasting Gospel, and (as it were) Embassadors extraordinary of Heaven. They were not sent to Learn the Facultys of *Aristotle*, *Cicero*, or *Aquinas*: No no; His Holy Spirit was the only Schoolmaster. He could with as much ease Imploy the whole University of *Athens*, as those Poor Men; but he did not, and why such as are called by his Name should despise his Grace when appearing in Persons of that Quality he Chose, is a meer disconcurrence with the Sanctions of this Ever-Blessed *Law-Giver*.

I do not represent these things to Introduce a promiscuous Liberty for all Persons to turn Preachers that are Christians, but to Reason People (if I could) out of extreams. For as on the one Hand I believe that meer Learning does not qualifie a Man to be a Preacher, so on the other side I am satisfied, that *Grace* without the gift of *Utterance* and *a sound Judgment* accompanied with an Ability to *Divide the word of Truth*, suitable to the necessity of the Hearers, does not qualifie any Man for a Publick Preacher. Of both these I take the Church to be Judge, and am satisfied that without the Approbation of a Christian Assembly, such as presume to take that Office upon them, where such an Approbation may be had, are none of Christs Messengers but their own, Because we shall so have no order, but confusion, which must not be introduced into the Church of Christ, unless you will change the best of *Governments*, into the worst of *Anarchy*. *Let every Man abide in the Calling whereunto he is called*, says the Evangelical unrepealable Statute.

It has been (and will be till reform'd) the Reproach of Christianity, that *Preachers* have err'd on both Extreams, some talk Nonsense, some talk above common-Sense. I have (saies one of our *Prelates*) seen some Learned Men call Children together, and ask them a few Questions; and then to begin a Profound Lecture, shaped according to his own large Dimensions, at whom Boys and Men gaze at, as a prodigious Monster of Learning: some saying as *Festus* to *Paul*, *Much Learning hath made him Mad.* Sure he knows not where he is, why, he is not in a University School of Divinity, but in an Assembly of weak and silly Youth, who understand his *English*, no more than *Hebrew*.

He adds, If Men would mark the form and phrase of the Gospel, and what kind of Matter and Language the Divine Oracle used in Preaching, even to the Learned *Scribes* and *Pharisees*; and read 1 *Cor.* 1. and the beginning of the second, it would Inform them what Language that is, that's Cloathed in such Meretricious Attire, *&c. Hec Ille.*

The Scope and Intention of this Digression, is to shew how this Sacred Office of Preaching is abused, and of what Influence that Abuse is to scare people away, who love to understand, and profit by what they hear; And so I shall conclude this Section in imitation of a late Ingenious *Author* (tho' not in his very words) That if there be not such a parcel of things as call themselves *Preachers* that Act thus, then no body is concern'd in this Character; but if there be, the Abuse is worth looking after, in order to Reformation, if not Punishment, of so great a Spiritual Grievance.

SECT. V.

Express Scripture against Compulsion of Conscience.

THese Excellent and Important *Truths* mentioned, are not only built upon the firm Foundation of solid and unanswerable Reason, but also upon the Infallible Authority of the Law, and Word of God. To convince you of which, pray be pleased to consider the following Texts.

Hear what the Apostle *Paul* saies, 2 *Tim.* 2. 24. (mark that this Epistle is written to a Bishop) *And the Servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all Men; apt to Teach, Patient, (or Enduring Bearing,) ver.* 25. *In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure*

will give them Repentance, to the acknowledging of the Truth. ver. 26. *And that they may recover themselves out of the Snare of the Devil, who are taken Captive by him at his Will.*

From this passage it is evident, that the Apostle forbids all rigorous Courses, even towards *Infidels*; and that he expressly sets down the right Christian Course of Convincing and Converting them, *viz.* By Charity and Meekness: And if Christians will make use of Church Curses, and Humane Laws, Enacted only against Seditious persons, and Disturbers of the Government, to force Innocent Christians that agree with themselves, in the Essential Articles of Christianity, to Disputable Modes of Circumstantial Ceremonies, confess'd by all to be of Humane Original; In my Opinion, they disagree with this Blessed Man, who after he Teaches the Bishop his Duty, advises him to leave the success to God; But not a syllable of Jayling, Imprisoning, or Fining them.

Another Apostle forbids us to Condemn one another. *James* 4. 12. *There is one Law-giver* (saies he) *who is able to save and to destroy: Who art thou that Judgest another?* suitable to which (mark I pray) what the former Apostle saies, *Rom.* 14. 4. *Who art thou that Judgest another Mans Servant? to his own Master he standeth or falleth; yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand.* ver. 5. *One Man esteemeth one Day above another: another esteemeth every Day alike. Let every Man be fully perswaded in his own mind.* ver. 22. *Hast thou Faith? have it to thy self before God. Happy is he that Condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth.* That is, whose Conscience accuseth not his outward Profession.

This most zealous *Preacher* of the Gospel, returns so condescending and moderate an Answer to a Case of a far harder sound than is here maintained, which argues that he took his gentle Pen from the soft Wing of the Dove. 1 *Cor.* 7. 12. &c. *If any Brother hath a Wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.* ver. 13. *And the Woman which hath a Husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.* ver. 14. *For the unbelieving Husband is sanctified to the believing Wife* (*viz.* in a Matrimonial Correspondence.) *And the unbelieving Wife is sanctified to the Husband,* &c. ver. 15. *But if the unbeliever depart, let him depart; A Brother or a Sister is not in Bondage in such Cases: But God hath called us to Peace.* ver. 16. *For what knowest thou O Wife, whether thou shalt save thy Husband? Or how knowest thou O Man, whether thou shalt save thy Wife?* ver. 17. *But as God distributed to every Man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk, and so Ordain I in all Churches.*

Pray

Pray mark, good Reader, what can be said more Efficaciously to oblige Christians to Christian forbearance, than so plain an Injunction to live peaceably with meer Heathens. You may see moreover, that 2 *Cor.* 1. 24. He denies that even the Apostles themselves have any Soveraignty over the Conscience, but only Commissions to assist the Conscientious.——*Not for that we have Dominion* (saies he to the *Corinthians*) *over your Faith, but are helpers of your Joy: For by Faith you stand.* In this he exactly observes the Orders which Christ gave to his Apostles, *Go and Teach*, (not compel) *Matth.* 28. 19. *And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that House or City, shake off the Dust of your Feet*, as we find practised, *Act.* 13. 51. Mark, they are not commanded to trample upon them as Dust under their Feet; the Planters of Christian Religion had never any such Commission. If the people would not believe, they did e'en let them alone, with only that harmless Testimony that they had done their Duty, and left them to God.——O how widely different is this little Dust-shaking, which neither Kill'd nor Jayl'd any body, from the Thunder-claps of *Popish Bulls, Interdicts, Smithfield Flames, Imprisonments, Fines?* &c.

Consonant to this Principle of Meekness, our Saviour himself instructs his Disciples. *Matth.* 23. 10. *Be not call'd Rabbi*, (that is, Imposers in Spiritual Matters, or Lords over the Conscience) *For one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are Brethren.* From these Texts Reader, infer what you can rationally,—for it were but to light a Candle to the Sun, for me to go about to Illustrate them.

I wonder what the Patient forbearing of the *Tares* means, and letting them grow together till the time of Harvest, Ay, and along with the Wheat too, til the Spiritual Reaper comes,—unless it be a Christian Toleration. I cannot fix any other Sense upon that *Scripture Parable*, but that we ought not to pluck up each other by the Roots, because we are not alike,—for it may happen that some of the very Wheat may be destroyed by Corn-Weeders. Therefore 'tis certainly the safest and sobrest way to be quiet, and leave the management of the Spiritual Corn-Fields to the Lord of the Harvest, till he Orders the contrary.

That admirable President of mildness towards the *Samaritans*, a Surly Inhospitable sort of people, (that would not receive *even Christ himself*) is very Notable. The Disciples *James* and *John*, *would have Fire immediately Commanded down from Heaven to Consume them*, as in the Days of *Elias*, but our Merciful God Rebuked their Zeal with this sweet and tender reply, *Luk.* 9. 55, 56. *Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of: For*

the Son of Man is not come to destroy Mens Lives, but to save them. This one Example abundantly satisfies all Objections drawn from the Practice of *Elias*, *Jehu*, the Sons of *Levi*, &c. in the *Old Testament*; For as they had an Express Command from God to warrant their Zeal, we have an Express Warrant from Christ to Command Meekness.

If any one shall shuffle in a *suspition* that this moderate temper was meant only for the Times of Persecution, when the Christians had no *temporal power*; let him first confess that these were the best and purest Times, and then shew a *Warrant Dormant* under our *Saviour's* hand (that is in his *Gospel*) to Commissionate his Disciples, as soon as they should get the Sword into their hands, to use the severity of Penal Laws against all disobeyers, and I submit. But if they can cite no such Authority, let them consider whether compulsion of Conscience is consistent with the just Liberties and Priviledges of a Christian.

The *Church of England* approves not of *Donatism*, nor that *Romish Arrogance* which pronounces *All Dissenters damn'd*. No, no; 'tis evident both by publick Declarations, and the Writings and Preachings of many of the most Eminent *Church-men*, that Salvation is not tyed up here, to a meer Conformity to what the *English-Church* differs in, from others; Of this we have a fresh and famous Instance in the *Charitable* and *Christian-like* entertainment given to the *French Protestants* that came hither for *Sanctuary*, from the present Persecution in their Native Country. This clearly manifests that our *Church* Quarrels not with the *Dissenting-Protestants*; For it would be a very strange *Riddle*, to entertain *Protestants* of the very same perswasion with so much tenderness and hospitality, and at the very same Instant, exact the utmost mite, that the Penal Laws require, from their *Protestant Country-men*, who disagree in nothing from these forreign *Brethren*, but only in Language (I mean with respect to *Articles* of *Religion*) so that he that will charge the present Prosecutions upon the *Church of England*, does charge her at one and the same time, with severity to our own Natives, and Charity to Strangers of the same Profession. Now, since it is not to be presumed that the *Church of England* would act with such Partiality and Condradiction, may we not rationally conclude, that this unreasonable Prosecution, (when *Popery* is watching all opportunities to Ruine *Conformists*, as well as *Nonconformists*) is to be charged only on some particular Self-seeking persons, or such as do not calmly consider what the Circumstances of things are?

The Judgment of His Majesty, and the Resolves of our last Parliaments, (all true *Patriots* and *Church-men*) that have given security to the

Government,

Government, by taking such *Tests* and *Oaths* as the Law requires,) are convincing demonstrations, that 'tis not the *Church* and *State*, but some certain persons that care not how the World goes, (so their present ends be accomplished,) are Authors of the severeties some feel, from the Execution of such Laws, as stand lookt upon, rather to be forborn by publick Votes, as aforesaid; And which ('tis hop'd) that *August* Assembly (*King*, *Lords*, and *Commons*) when His Majesty will be pleased to call a Parliament, will mitigate, to the great joy of many Innocent Subjects, that mind only their own particular Concerns, and quietly submit to the Establish'd Government.

SECT. VI.

AT the writing of this, there came to my hands a Paper newly published, with this Title, *A Second Argument for a more full and firm Union amongst all good Protestants, wherein the* Nonconformists *taking the Sacrament after the manner of the* Church of England, *is justified*, &c. *In a Letter to a Friend.* Because the *Scope* of it is not only to magnifie the *Church of England*, (which I do not in the least reflect upon) but also to fix an *Odium* upon *Dissenters*, and render them more intollerable in the Eye of the Government, than the Charity of many Pious and Learned *Conformists* either desire, or think seasonable; I have thought it agreeable to the Nature of my Subject, to leave a few modest *Remarks* upon it. And,

1. If the *Conversion* of such *Dissenters*, as are mentioned *p.* 1. be really the Effect of *Conviction* of mind, without any sinister ends, I shall not blame them for walking according to their *Light*, for that were to contradict the Design of these few Sheets, viz. *The Exercise of a Charitable meekness towards our weak Brethren.* But if it be meerly for fear of the Penal Prosecution there likewise mentioned, it is probable that the Advocates of such a practice, (*viz.*) to Conform to such things as they before cry'd down as not *Evangelical*, or at best think still to be doubtful,) will hardly prove *Martyrs*.

Temporizing is *Diametrically* opposite to the Nature of *Christianity*; And such as are for selfish worldly ends, list themselves among the purest *Professors* of *Evangelical Truths*, are justly branded with the *Ignominious Name* of *Hypocrites*. But whether these Men do it out of Conscience, or for

for any By-ends, *The Lord only knows*, for he is *the Searcher of Hearts*; and there we leave it.

The Expressions p. 3. are so perplext and unintelligible, that I cannot well pick out the meaning of it. If by *Sons of Leviathan* (barring the unusualness of the Phrase) be meant, the *Romish Clergy*; the Paper then supposes such, to be *Instructors* among the *Dissenters*, and of great *Influence* over them: But that is no less than a malicious and groundless *Slander*. And I Challenge this Author to justifie the surmise by any *Demonstrative Instances*. Or,

2. If it means the *Teachers* of the *Dissenters*, (for one of these it must be) who are represented as frighting the people from *Conformity*, and scaring them out of *Church* by calling it, and its Ministers, *Antichristian*; let the *Author* produce the Words or Writings of any eminent *Nonconformist Preacher* or *Preachers*, that have branded the *Church of England* with that Odious *Epithete*, and I will joyn with him to abhor the *Calumniators*. All *Sober Dissenters* universally agree, that the *Romish Hierarchy* is the *Antichrist* spoken of in the *Scripture*; and it was lately well proved in a *Treatise* Intituled, *Schematologia*, by a *Dissenting-Preacher*. And for them to make the *Church of England* another *Antichrist*, is not only disconsonant to their publick and avowed *Principles*, but the highest violation of that *Charity*, and *Divine Principle* of Love which they owe to their *Christian Conforming Brethren*, that agree with them in all the substantial parts of the *Faith*, and differ only in Circumstances confessedly indifferent by the very *Imposers*.

I am surprized to find such a *Scheme* of *Divinity* in this Paper, *p.* 3. as I never yet saw or heard from a *Protestant Writer*. All things necessary to Salvation are *peremptorily* laid down by this *Author*, in these four particulars; upon which take a few Notes.

1. *The Learning of a good* Catechism, *to aid and conduct their* Faith.

2. *A good and well Composed Form of Prayer to discharge their Devotion.*

3. *To hear Learned and Good Men Preach to revive and quicken them to Duty.*

4. *To Square and Regulate their Lives by Moral Precepts (or the Law of Nature.)*

Here's the *sum total* of what's necessary to Salvation in this *Author's* Opinion.—But he is not content *Dogmatically* to make so Diminutive a Reduction of *Christianity*, but will also ensure your Soul for you, in these words,——"The which [*meaning the said particulars*] whosoever "shall humbly and carefully observe, constantly and Conscientiously per-

"form,

" form, we [*that, me is himself, as if he had been the Representative of the*
" Church of England] will assure them Salvation, and undertake to An-
" swer to God for them, and be content to stand chargeable with their
" *Blood*, if they do miscarry, *&c.*

1. As to the First, 'tis confessed that *Catechistical* Instructions were used in the Primitive Times, and since; and that if rightly managed, it is a necessary expedient to Inform the Judgments of the Ignorant. But I never yet knew that it was made to lead the *Van* of such *Articles*, as are necessary to Salvation, before. It is a means indeed, which (as the Spirit of God Influences) may be Instrumentally subservient to Convert the unconverted. But 'tis meer *Popery* to Attribute any such Virtue to it, as if the meer Learning of a bare Form of *Catechistical Questions* and *Answers*, were a thing necessary to Salvation; and this I take to be the Papers meaning.

The way of *Catechising* in the Primitive Ages of *Christianity*, was for some of the *Church Elders* to call the Youth and other Ignorant Persons together, at some certain Times, and examine them concerning the *Faith*, always explaining what was obscure to their weak understandings, not tying themselves to any Form, but administring their *Questions*, and shaping their *Instructions* as the Capacity of the *Catechumeni* required, like *Divine School-Masters* teaching their *Spiritual Pupils*, and with fervent Prayers recommending the success to God, the *Converter* of Souls. So that *Catechising* is no more than a Christian endeavour, or expedient for the begetting of *Faith*, —*not an aid and conduit of Faith* (as the Paper words it) because the persons *Catechis'd*, were supposed to be yet unconverted. Besides, to make *formal Catechising* a positive means of Salvation, is to Damn all that have not the opportunity to Learn it by Heart, and yet that there are many such in the World, that are nevertheless saved, is undoubtedly known to this *Author*, who seems to make *Christianity* consist in *External Forms*, and a Morall Deportment, or Conversation.

2. As to the Second, *viz. A good and well Composed Form of Prayer to discharge their Devotion.* It sounds so different from *Praying with the Spirit and Understanding*, that I cannot but marvel at it.

I do not at all blame such as use Forms of Prayer, for they may, for ought I know, Pray with the Spirit; likewise considering the Form prescribed by our *Lord Jesus* himself, *Matth.* 6. But this is as clear as the Sun, that neither in all the *New Testament*, (not the First Three Hundred Years, there) can be produced any Record of known Credit, that any Stinted Forms were Imposed; And good Reason, for all the Children of God, can represent their grievances to their Heavenly Father. And though

their

their Petitions are expressed in Lisping Notes, or by the unutterable groans of the Spirit; yet they are not for all that rejected any more than a loving Father would deny his hungry Child a piece of Bread, because he cannot speak plain, or uses not a Formal Address for it.

But for this *Author* to make a Form of Prayer necessary to Salvation, is to Damn such as will not, or do not, make their Applications to the *Mercy Seat*, in the stinted and Composed Conceptions of others, which possibly may not reach their Case, or (as he calls it) *discharge their Devotion*.

3. As to the Third thing necessary to Salvation, *viz. To hear Learned and Good Men Preach, to revive and quicken to Duty*. I say, That to attend the Sacred Dispensations of the Word of *Truth*, in order to growth in Grace, and Spiritual Edification, is a *Christian Duty*.—And that the *Preacher* ought to be Learned in the *Scriptures*, and a *Good Man*, that is of such Goodness as the utmost pressing after it, can arrive at. If the *Author* means by Learning and Goodness, what may be meerly attainable by School Faculties, and that which the *Philosophers* call *Morality*, abstracted from the Influences of Converting and *Evangelical Grace*, I must *Dissent* from him till he proves, that *Christianity* and *Morality* are one and the same thing; Or that, *Morality* is that *Grace* by which we are *saved through Faith*. If he proves that, it will follow that the coming of Christ to Plant an *Evangelical Religion* in the World, and by his Death to save Mankind was unnecessary, because Salvation might have been attain'd by the *Philosophy* of *Plato*, and the rest of the *Heathen Moralists*. This *Author's* Divinity seems to look this way: For his fourth thing necessary to Salvation, is for Men *to Square and Regulate their Lives by Moral Precepts (or the Law of Nature.)* To which I say, That *Christians* ought to do not only this, but more too, so that *Christian Duty* terminates not here: It is not confined to practical or speculative *Morality*, which is only a Branch or Species of *Christianity*, and is as much in degree below that *Faith* and *Spiritual Grace* that saves the Soul through the *Efficacy of the Blood of Christ*, as the Body is below the Soul. The one is exercised in Principles of Common Equity betwixt Man and Man,——comprehended in that saying, *Do as ye would be done unto*; The other is exercised in a Spiritual Commerce with the Divinity by *Faith*, *Prayer*, and other *Gospel Graces*, which *Natural Philosophy* (meerly consider'd as such) can no more perform, than a Man stark Blind can judge of Colours, or *Lazarus* could get out of his Grave before the All quickning power of the Mediator rais'd him. The *Gospel* represents such as were *Naturally Alive*, to be *Spiritually Dead*. And *Philosophy*

more

Why [illegible] *Grace is Chalk'd out by the Author to be a very ridiculous thing.*

Before I touch upon the Reasons of this *Caution*, in justification of *Nonconformists* taking the Sacrament after the manner of the *Church of England*, give me leave to put in this Caution, *That I do not in what I write directly or indirectly, dispute against the Lawfulness of the Administration of this Ordinance, as us'd in the said Church*; but my Scope and Intention is, to shew how unreasonable it is, for this *Author* to represent the *Nonconformists* as such silly *Sectaries*, because they have so wide a Throat as he, to swallow what they cannot Digest; and consequently, that such of them as *Dissent* out of pure Conscience, though they suffer such Penalties, as this Gentleman it seems does not care to be concern'd in, are to be born withal, whilst they behave themselves peaceably and dutifully towards the Civil Government. And to give him a hint, that if he be one of those *well-meaning Dissenters, that has Conversed well near 30 Years amongst them (as he says)* p. 1. then either he saw their folly and groundless scrupulosity (as he angerly calls it) before the present juncture, or not: If he saw it before, and would not make discovery of it in order to his *full and firm Union*, as he Baptizes his Pamphlet, how can he clear himself of *Unfaithfulness*, if not *Hipocrise*, in not beginning this *Blessed Atchievement* sooner, that he might prevent the jealousie of the *Government*, and the sufferings of so many Poor Families as he talks of.

But if he be but a new *Proselite* to the *Church of England*, and is Converted on a suddain, as on the one hand people will be apt to suspect him, because he chuses a time of suffering to forsake his Old Brethren, and think him a *Temporizer*: so on the other hand, he will be lookt upon as a *Novice* in *Reformation*, and Old Experienc'd Men, will hardly be perswaded to Learn their *Religion* from the little pedantick subtilties of such variable *Dissenters*, who move with the *State Compass*.

These things I speak not from any prejudice against the *Author*, (whoever he be) but to put him in mind, in a Spirit of meakness, that it would better become him rather to exercise Charity towards his forsaken Brethren, (if he has been a *Dissenter*) and since he has freed himself from the lash of suffering, that he would not add to their burthen, at so Licentious a Rate as he does in this Pamphlet. If they are in an Error, let him leave them to God, as they are willing to leave him quietly to the happiness of the secure Station he has chosen.

In *p.* 4. he begins his Proofs, which the Judicious and Conscientious *Nonconformist* will look upon more subtil then solid. All that I shall re-

mark another, will be this, because they would not to disapprove the *Communion* of the *Church of England*, but to intreat the Prosecutors to shew Christian Compassion to peaceable *Dissenting Brethren*; that this *Author* would if he writes a *Third Argument*, resolve me a few plain *Queries*.

1. Whether the positive Rules set down by the *Soveraign Legislator* (with respect to his Ordinances) are not to be observed by Christians exactly, without any Addition or Substraction, as near as can be?

2. Whether it be not an Imputation on the *Divine Wisdom*, to suppose his Laws imperfect? Or that he stands in need of *Spiritual Privy Councils*, to Regulate and Establish the Circumstances of his Lordship?

3. Whether, if the said *Divine Laws* be perfect, and unalterable, (as they certainly are) any quiet, and Conscientious *Dissenter*, ought to be punished for Non observance of such Ceremonies as are confess'd to be of a meer Humane Original?

4. Whether it be an Argument of *Piety*, for such as have got on the warm side of the Hedge, to pelt dirt at those that cannot stride so largely, or jump over so nimbly as they do?

For my part I thought, and still think, that the things necessary to Salvation, may be comprehended under this short Sentance, *viz. To Love God with all our Hearts, and our Neighbours as our selves*; which is the *Epitome* of *Christian Religion*, and a *Compendium* of the first and second Table.

Faith in Christ Jesus, the Saviour of the World, who is God, Co-equal and Co-essential with the Father, and a Life and Conversation suitable to the Sacred Rules of the *Scriptures* of *Truth*, which comprehends *Morality* and *Duties* purely Divine too, do constitute a Christian: And if this Mans *Scheme* of *Religion* mentioned before, be true, which as far as I can see, reaches no further then to what the Law of Nature teaches,——then he may throw away that superfluous thing called the *Bible*, and study *Seneca*, and *Hobs* his *Leviathan*, &c.

Certainly this *Author* has but a despicable Opinion of *Faith*, though the *Scripture* says, *That 'tis impossible to please God without it*; when he cannot afford it a little room among his things necessary to Salvation,——only supposes Men to have it, by which I have ground to suspect, that the *Faith* he means, is nothing but some kind of *Moral perswasion*, or other, that being suitable to the rest of his Discourse. His little Pedantick *Dilemma's*, to justifie the Communion of the *Church of England*, p. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. are mostly frivolous; because no sober, nor wise *Dissenter* (as far as I can see) Condemns that Communion. 'Tis only some things respecting

ing the Circumstances of Administration, that they disallow, as being not so exactly Quadrate with the Rule. Therefore let this *Author*, (if he will do any thing to the purpose) leave beating the Air, and draw a parellel between the Communion he justifies, and what is written of it in *Scripture*, ——

1. Respecting the persons Administring. 2. The persons receiving. 3. The manner how. 4*ly*. The Time when. And 5*ly*. To what end. And if he makes them agree, then he will Convert all the *Dissenters* in that great Point, for which they suffer. But if they do not agree, then let this *Dilema-maker* give us some Reasons for the Disparity, and by what Authority the alteration was made: Or else in good earnest let him e'en appear bare-fac'd, and blunder it out in plain *English*, *That the Laws of God are subservient to the Institutions that Humane Policy thinks fit to superadd.* I would withal, intreat the *Author* to bless the World with a like parallel about *Infant-baptism*, that he may reduce those *Dissenters* that have no good Opinion of it.

But now comes the Mortal Wound (as he thinks) have a care poor *Phanaticks!* —— *Here the greatest number of them are affirm'd to hold Principles dangerously Heretical, and most abominably abusive of the most Holy and Blessed God,* —— *yea, they unGod him.* This is most sad indeed, —— but wherein I pray? *By making him the greatest Author of mischief,* —— *folly,* &c. *by their idle Dreams about his Peremptory and Eternal Decrees.* Oh! There's the business; this is the excellent and stupendious folly [fine *Rhetorick*] which he admires at.

Here you see how he brands the poor *Dissenters* for the most *abominable of Heretick*s; and how does he prove it? Why he Fathers an Opinion upon them, which none but a mad-Man will own, and then pours you out a long winded *Rhapsody* of such Devilish Consequences, as are able to scare a body out of all Charity with the *Dissenters*.

For my part, if I had thought it had been such a Damn'd thing to believe, *That God fore-ordain'd whatsoever should come to pass*, —— I would never have done it. Well, but the *Author* is pelting lustily at his *Man of Straw*, and the *Odium* is thrown upon the greatest part of the *Dissenters*. What I shall say in reply, is this,

1. If there be any body guilty of this *Heresie*, *viz.* That God is the *Author* of Sin, I heartily leave him at this *Author's* Mercy, for I look upon that Opinion to be no better then he represents it. But,

2. He is too unchariable to charge the greatest number of the *Dissenters* with it, who for any thing I find Discourse only of the Decrees of God,

as *Predestination, Election*, &c. as the *Scripture* to express them, and as the greatest part of the *Church of England* holds.

3. I could wish that Men were temperate, and modest in writing and discoursing of these great Secrets of Gods Decrees, and forbear to extort Consequences with such violence from doubtful and obscure places. Men have got such an *Itch* to Espouse some Darling Opinion or other, that no reason can remove them from it, though *Christianity* languishes in the very Vitals of it, by these Brawls and Animosities. I have known too many that won't trouble their Heads with the most certain and most Important Duties of the Gospel, that instead of reading the Commandments, and the plain Practical Parts of *Scripture*, will needs be making Comments upon the obscurest *Allegories* of the Prophets, and the Revelation of St. *John*. Pray what necessity have we to confound poor simple Christians with those School Tricks, which much Idle and Licentious Wits, pester the *Church of Christ?* It was enough for the Apostle to know nothing but *Jesus Christ, and him Crucified*, (as was said) and 'tis most assuredly true, that whatsoever is necessary to Salvation, is so plainly laid down in the *Scripture*, that the meanest Capacity may, (by the aid of Divine Grace) understand it.

'Tis therefore a dangerous piece of wantonness to be peeping into the Secret Cabinets of the Almighty, and I am sure, such Fooleries have done much mischief in the World. For,

1. 'Tis enough for us to know that the Lord God hath chosen a people for himself, *viz.* such as believe in him, and obey his Laws, and that he will Eternally save them. And,

2. That such as reject his Grace and Mercy, and disobey his Gospel, will fall under his Eternal Wrath.

With this Belief I content my self, and firmly hold, That God is not, nor cannot be the *Author* of any Evil, but on the contrary that he is the *Author* of all Good. I believe that Mans Damnation is purely and Originally from his own wickedness, and that his Eternal Destruction is not from any Decree of God; which whosoever sales, does at the same time affirm, That God does Damn him for what he cannot possibly avoid.

On the other side I Beleive, that no Man can save himself, but that the *Lord Jesus Christ* is the only and sole *Author* and *Cause* of Salvation, and that he alone purifies the corrupt Wills and Hearts of Men, adapting and preparing them to receive his Grace and saving Truths, through the Power and Influence of the Holy Spirit. This is my *Creed*, in this Point, and here I rest, not proposing it by way of Imposition on others, but to shew

that

that this moderate middle path, which in my Judgment is Sound and *Orthodox*, and would lead us to the desireable *Mansions* of Peace, out of which our *Pulpit-Wars* have a long time kept us.

I doubt some Intemperate *Zealots*, that would as soon part with their Eyes, as their Notions, will be grumbling at what I say, as too favourable to one side or other. But as I regard not unjust censure, so I Challenge them to mend it. Methinks if these general Truths, and some such like, be enough for the people to know they do the Church no good service, that instead of Preaching Practical Duties, will needs be frightening the *Auditory* with hidden Decrees, absolute Reprobation, and some such new made *Thunder-Bolts*, able to scare 'em into Despair. God Commanded his Gospel to be Preach'd to *all the World*; that such as would receive it should be saved. But these Men have got you a hidden Decree, which Damns the greatest part of Mankind, yet without the hand of any *Heavenly Notary* to testifie it. And pray tell me, what is it more or less, than to mock the poor people, to invite them to believe, *&c.* when 'tis impossible for them savingly to do it, if their Names be Registred in that black and irreversible *Muster Roll*.

I do not design to reflect upon any, nor do I List my self with those who follow *Arminius*, or *Calvin*; I am sorry to find extreams on both hands. I would only beseech *Dissenters* to Preach necessary Truths, and let the hidden Decrees of God alone, with other unnecessary Notions; which practice will undoubtedly be of great and useful Consequence, and will prevent the Bawling of such *Authors* as this is, who I believe will not Quarrel with what I here write, nor charge his horrible Consequences upon it; and yet I am sure, all Sober *Dissenters* are of this mind; For I never yet met any of them, but upon a sober debate, as occasion offered it, were obliged by fair Argument to own it. And he that believes this, believes enough, as to this Point, and more will but distract and confound the plain and honest Christian. I have been the longer about this, to let this *Author* know that his charge of *Heresie* is stretcht unreasonably wide, and I hope I have gain'd thus much by taking notice of this Pamphlet, that upon a serious and unbyas'd perusal of this few Remarks, any Reader of common Capacity will see a necessity of better Arguments then he uses. And 'tis hop'd that our Church will use that way of reducing *Dissenters*, *viz.* Mild Christian Debates and Conferences, Sober Brotherly Perswasions, with hearty Prayers for each other; which were the Church Weapons of the Primitive Christians, not such Whirlwind and Thunder, as some certain *Renegado's* yonder at *Algier*, or thereabouts, would Con-

jure

jure up, against a little scatter'd Fleet of their *Dundum* Friends.

I profess I cannot but wonder at the unparallel'd Confidence of this Pamphlet, that blushes not to charge the greatest part of the *Sectaries*, (as its young zeal words it) meaning *Protestant Dissenters*) with *making God the Author of wickedness*, in such terms as quoted before; which is no less then to charge them with the *blackest of Blasphemies*. Now the Laws of our Land have provided Condign punishment for that (most) Monstrous of Treasons, against the King of Kings. And the *Author* cannot acquit himself of *Misprision*, if he gives not a *Catalogue* of such horrible *Delinquents*, that the Law may punish them, and that all Christians may shun them as the worst of *Hereticks*. Let him produce that, together with Legal Evidence, and then *fiat Justitia*, let new *Tyburns* be erected for them, if the Legislative Authority thinks fit.

Reader, I have almost done with this Pamphlet, which I believe will Proselite only such as are under the Influence of something I shall not name. Only give me leave to add a few Lines by way of observation, upon the *specimen*, the *Author* gives of the *Wit and Policy of these giddy Sectaries*, (as he calls them.)

Would they have (saies he) p. 12.) *Arch-Bishops*, —*Bishops*, —*the best Clergy*, —*all the best Clergy of* England, —*Tythes*, —*Universities*, —*Parish Levy's*, —*Down?* This he Answers with a parcel of Gingling, *Yes, Yes, Yesses.*

Then to fill up the Vacuities, he insinuates that these same *Sectaries* would Elect *Tinkers, Taylors, Watermen, Shoomakers, Coffee-men, Hat-Dressers*, &c. concluding with a pious *Irony, That the Christian World must be acquainted with this Honourable —Reformation?*

In the first place the Slander is Venemous, and the Deportment of the Grave and Reverend *Nonconformist Preachers* since His Majesties happy Restauration, confutes this wild Calumny. Let him name those giddy Fools, and let them be exposed for their sillines; Else let him avoid the charge of turning a false *Accuser of the Brethren, if he can.*

All that *Protestant Dissenters* desire, is but a Liberty to serve their God, according to their Light, in Cottages, or any where, quietly, without any Combination against the Government; nor do they begrudge the Governours of the Church their Dignities or Revenues. When they do otherwise, let them be stigmatiz'd with a Witness for me; for then they cease from being the Disciples of Christ, *whose Kingdom is not of this World.*

Secondly, If he has been a benefic'd *Holder-forth* amongst these *Sectaries*,

rise, he might have nam'd his own Trade with the rest; And should have Demonstrated which of those *Mechanicks*, have aspired to such high Church Dignities; without that, the Tale signifies nothing. There were *Mechanick Preachers* in the Primitive Times, I am sure; 'tis well they escape this Gentlemans lash; he deserves thanks for that Civility, however.

Well but (says the Pamphlet, *p.* 13.) *for forty years they have made no Bank, built no Free-Schools, purchas'd no Church-Lands,—pay no Tythes,—want consent to have all things common,—their Preachers go a Begging,—*&c.

This I must confess is a frightful charge, and able to scare their *Preachers* away from them, if they only gape for a Benefice. But the *Author* did not consider that this is a good Argument against his Insinuations of their Ambition, for if this be true, then the Government needs not fear them, and the Prosecution of Penal Laws may be spar'd, when the *Sectaries* make no provision for their Ministers, nor do Incorporate themselves into a formidable Faction. Besides, since the Case is thus (or the Pamphlet tells a Whisker) either the *Dissenting Preachers*, (as formerly hinted) are Fools to go a Begging, when they may be welcome to our Church, and provided for, or else their *Dissent* is from pure Conscience, and so, Christian Charity would rather pitty then persecute them.

To conclude this *Section*, if the *Author* of this Paper thinks fit to go on, let him produce Arguments of weight and solidity, and wave the Language of Reproach, and he will either convince us, or be answered soberly.

SECT. VII.

After this tedious *Parenthesis*, which unlookt for, fell in my way, I will re-assume my Discourse, and in all humility offer some Reasons, that the Intention of the *Law-makers*, was for suppressing Sedition, and Conspiracies against the Government, and not meerly to punish quiet and peaceable *Dissenters*. And will in order thereunto, give you an Abstract of the words of an Ingenious *Author*, lately published.

The Laws against *Dissenters* are of two different Natures. 1. Some Statutes are wholly designed against *Papists*, and ought only to be Executed against them, tho' some would have them put in Execution against

Dissenting

jure up, against a little scatter'd Fleet of their *Quondam* Friends.

I profess I cannot but wonder at the unparallel'd Confidence of this Pamphlet, that blushes not to charge the greatest part of the *Sectaries*, (as its young zeal words it) meaning *Protestant Dissenters*) with *making God the Author of wickedness*, in such terms as quoted before; which is no less then to charge them with the *blackest of Blasphemies*. Now the Laws of our Land have provided Condign punishment for that (most) Monstrous of Treasons, against the King of Kings. And the *Author* cannot acquit himself of *Misprision*, if he gives not a *Catalogue* of such horrible *Delinquents*, that the Law may punish them, and that all Christians may shun them as the worst of *Hereticks*. Let him produce that, together with Legal Evidence, and then *fiat Justitia*, let new *Tyburns* be erected for them, if the Legislative Authority thinks fit.

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To conclude this *Section*, if the *Author* of this Paper thinks fit to go on, let him produce Arguments of weight and solidity, and wave the Language of Reproach, and he will either convince us, or be answered soberly.

SECT. VII.

After this tedious *Parenthesis*, which unlookt for, fell in my way, I will re-assume my Discourse, and in all humility offer some Reasons, that the Intention of the *Law-makers*, was for suppressing Sedition, and Conspiracies against the Government, and not meerly to punish quiet and peaceable *Dissenters*. And will in order thereunto, give you an Abstract of the words of an Ingenious *Author*, lately published.

The Laws against *Dissenters* are of two different Natures. 1. Some Statutes are wholly designed against *Papists*, and ought only to be Executed against them, tho' some would have them put in Execution against

Dissenting

Dissenting Protestants, for not coming to Church, and receiving the Sacraments, *&c.*

2. The Laws indeed that were made against *Puritan Sectaries* (as they call them) or *Dissenting Protestants*. The Statutes of the first sort, are in Number five, *viz.* The 1. *Elizabeth*, ca. 2. the 23. *Elizabeth*, ca. 1. the 29. *Elizabeth*, ca. 6. the 1. *Jac.* ca. 4. and 3. *Jac.* ca. 4.

Here good Reader, I thought to have enlarged, but upon second thoughts (having resolv'd to be as brief as may be) I judge it more to your satisfaction to refer you to a late Treatise Intituled, *English Liberties*, where from *p.* 171. to *p.* 200. you have this Subject handled with much judgment, candor, and clearness; the Book is to be had at any Booksellers, and is well worth every *English-mans* perusal.

The Author plainly demonstrates that these Statutes intend only the Prosecution of *Papists*, and therefore all the reason and equity in the World will disallow their being put in Execution against peaceable *Protestant Subjects*, who are no way concern'd in them; which was the Opinion of the House of Commons, who were more likely to Interpret a doubtful Law, then such particular Justices and others, as are now so busie to Execute them against the mind of the *Law-makers*.

Sabbati, Sexto Die Nov. 1680.

"Resolved *nemine contradicente*, That it is the Opinion of this House, "that the Acts of Parliament made in the Reigns of Queen *Elizabeth*, "and King *James*, against Popish Recusants, ought not to be extended "against *Protestant Dissenters*.

That the 35*th.* of *Eliz.* is not now in force, the same *Author* Evidences by such solid and convincing Demonstrations, that they are in my judgment unanswerable, *p.* 181. *&c.*

And the sum is, that there are now no Laws in being to punish the *Conventicles*, and the *Non-conformist* Ministers, who did not Conform to the *Act of Uniformity*, made in the Reign of His present Majesty; But the Act commonly called the *Five Mile*, or *Oxford Act*, and the Conventicle Act, made the 22*th.* of our present Soveraign. These you have also judiciously handled, *Ibid.*

He that will seriously peruse these several Statutes, and lay aside prejudice, must needs conclude that it is not the meer *Dissent* which our *Lawmakers* intend to punish, for the Conventicle Act allows any Family to Worship God in their own way, provided there be no more then four persons besides the *Domesticks*. Nor does it punish meerly for the number

bermeather, unless there be Sedition, or a Conspiracy of the Parties meeting to disturb the Peace, or contrive Insurrections, or Traytorous Designs against the Government.

If there be any such meetings to be found, that instead of a pious and peaceable Worshipping of God, will be meditating Rebellion, let the utmost severity of the Law be put in Execution against them, for then they cease from being Christians, when they become Traytors; and such only, viz. Disturbers of the Peace, the just Laws of *England* design to suppress. But if there be no such wicked Practices or Conspiracies, but on the contrary a peaceable Deportment, and quiet, harmless behaviour to be found, in the meetings of these *Dissenters*, with what Conscience can those Laws be put in Execution against the Innocent, which were meant only to suppress Sedition, and secure the Government against such as actually disturb it. That that was the intention of the Legislators, *viz.* to punish only the guilty, is evident, and for any one to stretch those Statutes beyond the ends for which they were designed, is no less, than to shew himself undutiful to his Sovereign, unnaturally cruel to his poor Countrymen, an oppressor of his Brethren, and obnoxious to a severe Reckoning, in the great Day of Accounts. I have demonstrated before that, *Compulsion of Conscience* is Diametrically opposite to the Law and Word of God, yea, that it is morally impossible to make a Man believe against his Reason; and consequently that the Effects of *Compulsion* is only to force Men to Hypocrisie, since no external force can Convert the Soul.

Now I shall annex some *Quotations* from the Fundamental Laws of *England*, which express such a tenderness of the Law of God, that it tells you in down-right terms, *That no Act of Parliament, or Law, repugnant to the Law of God, is of any force*, Finch. p. 3. *And that no Man of what Estate, Degree, or Condition whatsoever, hath power to dispense with Gods Law, as all the Clergy of the Realm, and most of the Universities of Christendom, and we also affirm*, 28. H. 8. *And that against Scripture, Law, Prescription, Statute, nor Custom may avail; and if any be brought in against it, they be void, and against Justice.* Doctor, and Student, &c.

Now, besides what hath been said before of the Law of God, (which the Law of the Land positively declares—indispensible,) take here a brief *specimen* of it.

 1. All

1. All Men are Commanded to hear, learn, and keep it, and ought to be in their respective Stations, according to Divine Rules, ready to Communicate such Gifts as Christ bestows upon them, in order to Edify others. Mistake me not (Reader) I do not plead for any promiscuous or irregular Liberty, for any person to step beyond the bounds prescribed by the Soveraign Legislator, but to shew you that where a Talent is given, it should be improved. We find in Scripture, that there were Preaching *Kings, Princes, Judges, Levites, Psal.* 40. 9. *Deut.* 1. 1. and 12. 19. 2 *Chron.* 17. 7, 8, 9. Yea, Preaching *Mechanicks, Tradesmen, Tent-makers, Fishermen*, &c. *Mark* 6. 3. *Amos* 1. 1. *Mark* 1. 16, 17. *Act.* 18. 2. 1 *Cor.* 14. 1, 2, 31.

2. God's Law pronounces a *Woe* to his Preachers, if they Preach not his Gospel, 1 *Cor.* 9. 16.

3. Rewards and Promises are promised to Preachers, *Matth.* 10. 41. and 25. 21. and 5. 19. *James* 5. 20.

4. God's Law allows Preaching in Houses, Streets, Fields, &c. Yea, to great multitudes, with promised Mercies to the owners so receiving them, *Act.* 20. 20. and 28. 31. *Luke* 13. 26. *Matth.* 3. 1. and 10. 40, 41, 42.

5. God's Law denounces wrath to such as abuse his Preachers, and *beat their fellow Servants*, 1 *Thess.* 2. 16. *Matth.* 24. 48, 49, 50.

6. God's Law injoyns Men to *Assemble together in order to his Worship*, *Heb.* 10. 25. and 3. 13. *Act.* 2. 42. *Mal.* 3. 16. 18. Thousands at a time, *John* 6. 10. *Act.* 4. and 2. 41. &c. much more to the same purpose may be quoted. Now, I appeal to all sober Christians, whether any Law that contradicts this Divine Law, or by coercive means, and riged penalties, keeps Christians from these Duties, ought not to be relaxt, and forborn to be put in Execution, *because all humane Laws are to give place to the Law of God*, as our very National Laws assert; and whether this *Dissent* of a peaceable Conscientious People, from meer Ceremonies not enjoyned by the *Statute Law of Heaven*, deserves so rigorous a Treatment as a great many have felt, and still feel? &c.

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SECT. VIII.

BEsides the Law of God, and the Law of the Land, which sweetly harmonize together, (when the latter is not stretched beyond its meaning, by some whose Charity appears only in the Ruine of their poor honest Neighbours,) I would urge that great *Magna Charta* of Nature, a Law so just and comprehensive, that no Man can deny it; unless at the same time he devests himself of Humanity, and assumes the shape of a barbarous, and more then brutish Cruelty. It is this (in few words) *Do as you would be done unto*. This Golden Text Reverenc'd amongst the very Heathens (whose Precept it was, *Quod tibi non vis, alteri ne feceris*) might administer a *Copious Theme*, but I shall be brief, And content my self to ask two Questions of those Gentlemen, that are so busie in putting these Penal Laws in Execution; But still let me repeat the Caveat I have so often mentioned, that I plead not the Cause of Seditious Meetings, or such as contrive or design any evil against the State; but only such as *Dissent* purely out of Conscience, and manage their Separation with *Piety* towards God, and *Loyalty* to the King, together with a Christian becoming Deportment towards their Neighbours.

1. Whether they, (that is such as prosecute the *Protestant Dissenters*,) would be so deals withal themselves; *viz.* to be Imprison'd, Fin'd, Depriv'd of their Goods, Banisht from their dearest Relations, Wives, Children, &c. forc'd from their Trades and Callings, (which they live by the Labour of their their hands, or the faculties they were brought up to,) have their Families beg or starve, and in a word, utterly ruin'd, as to this World, and that meerly because they cannot Conform to what they are not convinc'd of, to be of Divine Institution? Or being Men of Conscience, will not be led by any Implicite Faith; If not, me thinks they should use the same tenderness to others, or else they violate this Law, (made Sacred *Matth.* 7. 12.)

2. Whether, if it had been their Lot to live in a Country where *Popery*, or *Presbyterianism*, is the publick Religion, would they look upon it to be just and fair dealing, meerly for their Conscientious *Dissent* to be fore'd to a Hypocritical Compliance, or be ruin'd in their Estates, if not Lives?

SECT. IX.

THe Grand *Topick* which the little mercenary *Pasquillers* use to justifie their Invectives against *Dissenters*, is the late dismal Rebellion, and the horrid Murther of His Majesties Royal Father, *&c.* This is a Subject which I would not touch upon, but that I am forc'd by the dayly Clamours of these *Pamphletters* to speak a few words to it. And,

1. If I know my own Heart, I can truly say, That I do from my very Soul abhor and detest all Principles that tend to Rebellion, or Disturbance of the publick or private Peace, and all such wicked persons as Imbrue their hands in the Blood of any Man, Woman, or Child, much more any such Traytors as practise against the Sacred Life or Person of the *Lord's Annointed*, for such persons are so far from deserving any favour or protection from the Government, that they ought to be rooted from off the face of the Earth, as the most execrable of *Miscreants*. And therefore let the *Authors* of our late Calamities, and the unparallel'd Murther of that Great and most Excellent Prince, be branded with everlasting Infamy for me. 'Tis not for Traytors, but for my Innocent fellow-Christians, that I beg the favour and pitty of such as are intrusted with the Execution of Penal Laws for Religion.

2. How far the *Papists* did Influence those fatal Convulsions, and whether the Nation ows not all its Calamity to their black and mystical Stratagems, the judicious unbyass'd Reader will soon determine, if he peruses Mr. *Care's History of the Plot*, reprinted 1681. from p. 42. to 71. I have not Room to transcribe it,

it, and therefore would advise (any that doubts it) to peruse it there Intire, 'tis worth his while.

4. 'Tis Diametrically opposite to Justice, to punish the Innocent for the Crimes of the Guilty.—And admitting that a great many under the Vizard of Religion, had a main hand in these lamentable (and too too deplorable) mischiefs before mentioned; there is no equity in the World, that their Villanies shall be chargeable upon (and their punishment extend to) such as were never concern'd in them.

The best Religion in the World cannot secure it self from Hypocrites, that disguise themselves till they have an opportunity to serve some Devilish turn, or other. That *Arch-Traytor* and *Informer Judas*, got in among the very Apostles, and many false Brethren crept in among the Primitive Saints;—the Devil himself will sometimes come Masqueraded as an Anger of Light. Why is the Christian Religion ever the worse for this? No, no, Divine Truths are still such, though the Sacred Profession of it is prophan'd and abus'd by such Hypocritical Wretches, to their own Damnation.

What I aim at, is this, *viz.* that we are to examine the Principles of such as profess Christianity under any form, declared in their publick Confessions of Faith, and the Writings of such as are own'd, and approv'd by them, and if we find them pernicious to the Government, or tending any waies to the disturbance of the publick peace; such are without Disputes to be suppress'd and punish'd as Enemies to the State. But if their Principles be in all Articles of Religion suitable to the Word of God, and (in Fundamentals) to the Establish Religion, it will unavoidably follow, That the miscarriages, or wickedness of some that creep in amongst them, are not to be charged upon their Christian Profession, (which allows no such thing) but upon the *Delinquents* themselves.

From hence I infer, that the Murther of His late Majesty, those Rebellions, Bloodsheds, and Overturnings of State, &c. then acted, are to be chargeable only upon such as were personally and actually guilty,———For I never heard, (and I dare boldly say that no Man ever did hear) that any of our *Dissenting Protestants* in their Confessions of Faith, have ever had so much Traytorous Impudence, as to justifie the least

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title of such horrid things, but the quite contrary, as may be shown in time.

If there be any now alive, who have had any hand in those dreadful Commotions, &c. If they have received His Majesties Pardon, they are thereby reinstated into equal Priviledges with the Innocent, unless by new Treasons they forfeit that Royal Grace. But if there be any of them excluded from the benefit of the *Act of Oblivion*, let them be punish'd, *fiat Justitia*.

I insist the longer upon this, to shew how unreasonable it is, for such a parcel of *Hackney Scribbers* to be perpetually bawling of 41, 41, and making the Crimes of such as are Dead, or were Executed for their Treasons, not only survive them, but persecute their poor Innocent Fellow Subjects with them; I could wish with all my Heart, that all those *halfpenny Pasquinists* on both sides, who meerly for their Bellies, pester City and Country, inventing Names of Reproach, as *Whigg*, *Tory*, *Trimmer*, &c. and begetting Feuds and Animosities betwixt His Majesties *Liege People*, were severely punish'd as *Disturbers of the publick Peace*; I am sure they deserve it more then the *Dissenters*, who are a peaceable trading People, and usefull Members of the State, who pay His Majesty all His Taxes and Revenues, to the utmost of what the Law requires, (which is not inconsiderable.) How intollerable is it then, for free born Subjects, Loyal to the King, and helpful in supporting the charge of the Government to be dayly and weekly Libel'd, and abus'd by those Rascally *Leeches of the Press*, that to serve their own little Craving Necessities, care not if they *sue the People together by the Ears*?

His Majesty out of His Royal Clemency was pleas'd to pass an *Act of Oblivion*, yea, so impatient was he, that he prest the *Parliament* with much earnestness, to make it ready for his *Royal Assent*. What then? why here you have his goodness, and Princely Lenity reviled, and contradicted, (almost dayly) by a certain *Incendiary*, who Conjures up the Memory of those fatal Times, and keeps the Nation's Old Wounds a Bleeding, in defiance of that Act, which was design'd to heal, and make them forgotten.

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THE CONCLUSION.

I Intended upon this Subject to have given you a parallel between the Doctrine of the *Church of England*, and the *Diſſenters*, but that I find it already well done by Mr. *Henry Care*, in his Book Intituled, *Utrum Horum*, &c. Printed 1682. To which I refer you, as alſo to the truly pious Treatiſes of that worthy *Author* (whoever he be) *of the Conformiſts Plea for the Nonconformiſts*, &c.

2. I purpoſed likewiſe to lay down ſome Demonſtrative Reaſons, why the *profeſſion of Popery is intollerable in a Proteſtant Kingdom*, (whom they account *Hereticks*) becauſe their Principles are Pernicious, and their Practices have been Dangerous, *&c.*

3. To ſhew the miſchiefs, and ſad Conſequences of proſecuting quiet and peaceable *Diſſenters* upon the Penal Laws, as having a direct tendency to weaken *the Proteſtant Intereſt*, for whoſe Ruine that common Enemy greedily gapes, (2.) How much it deſtroys Trade, and ruines Thouſands of Families, (3.) What a Scandal it is to the *Proteſtant Reformation*, when we quarrel and perſecute each other, (4.) What a diſparagement it is to the Actors, *&c.*

4. To ſhew the quality of *Informers*, and the quality of ſuch as they proſecute; with the Ravenous and Illegal proceedings of the former.

5. Produce Illuſtrious Teſtimonies of the worth of the *Diſſenters*, and how ſerviceable they have been to the Crown, as alſo the Witneſs of as eminent Church-men and States-men, as ever were in *England*, who gave them great *Encomiums*, and own'd them as *Brethren*.

6. Propoſe a modeſt Eſſay for Union amongſt all *Proteſtants*, with Demonſtrative Reaſons, that it is not only practicable, but abſolutely neceſſary; together with the Bleſſed Effects of ſuch an Accomodation.

But having already exceeded my intended limits, I muſt leave it to another opportunity, and my poor endeavours to the Bleſſing of the God of Peace.

FINIS.